

A  
True Relation  
Of Four most Barbarous and Cruel  
MURDERS

Committed in  
Leicester-shire

BY  
ELIZABETH RIDGWAY;

The like not known in any Age.

With the Particulars of Time, Place, (and other Circumstances) how she first *Poysoned* her own *Mother*; after that, a *Fellow-Servant*; then her *Sweet-Heart*; and last of all her *Husband*: for all which *Tragical Murders* she being brought to Justice, was Tryed, and found Guilty, at the late *Lent-Affizes* held for the said County: and for the same, was *Burnt to Death*, on *Monday* the 24<sup>th</sup>. of *March*, 1684.

A *Dam* being once fallen from the State of Innocency and driven from that Paradise of Pleasure and Security wherein God had placed him, instead of the sublime Life, to be as *Gods*, which the Devil had promised upon Eating the Forbidden Fruit, he put them upon the Destruction of one another; and such a Depravedness had Sin in those early Days brought upon their Nature, that the greatest piece of Manhood we  
A first

first hear of, was an Endeavour to destroy Humane Kind.

And, that the Arch-Enemy of Man might effect the utter Destruction of that Creature whose Excellent Creation he so much envied, whilst yet there was but a few in the World, he set one Brother to murder the other, even before any pretended Occasion, or Quarrel, could be alledged.

As the People increased in After-Ages, the same Enemy of Mankind stirred up Murders, Rapines, Bloodshed, and all things that tended to the Destruction of Humane Society, *Nation* against *Nation*, and *Family* against *Family*; which, since the World hath been Peopled, Languages and Kingdoms Divided, has gotten a fairer Title than that of Murder.

But of all Murders, none so plainly discovers the inherent Cruelty and Enmity which Sin has lodged in Humane Nature, as those committed by private Persons, upon Premeditation; who, though by the Laws of the Land Protected from open Violence one against another, yet, will take upon them to revenge every little Difference, or conceived Displeasure, by the private Murder of the Dearest Friend they have. Of which latter sort, a fresher and more barbarous Example, certainly, has not in this Age been heard of, than what I have now to relate from *Leicestershire*; a Female of that Country having out-done the *Desperadoes* of this Town for Cruelty, whose often Excesses in Drinking, Debaucheries amongst Women, and Heats of Blood produced therefrom, a little palliates for their Crimes, as more the Effect of Rashness and Madness, than the Bloodiness of their Natures.

*Elizabeth Ridgway*, late Wife of *William Ridgway*, (a Taylor at *Ipstocke*, a Village near *Bagworth* in *Leicestershire*, three Miles from *Market Bosworth*) being the fatal Subject of this Relation; She was the Daughter of-----

*Husbands,*

*Husbands*, a Farmer, who lived in that or a neighbouring Village, with whom she was brought up, and continued, untill she was about 29 Years of Age, being always looked upon as a Religious Maid, and a Follower of the *Presbyterians*; yet, as appears, she was a Wolf in a Lamb's Skin, or rather, a Devil in the Shape of a Saint, and great Cause to believe, that for eight years past, at the least (if not longer) she had been such: Yet, the first of her Tragical Actions that came to publick Discovery, was committed about three years since, when, she Poysoned her own Mother, (*viz. Mary Husbands*) for no other Provocation, that was known, but some falling out about their Household Affairs, or being reproved by her said Mother for some other thing she disliked in her.

Her Mother being dispatched, she kept her Fathers House about the space of a Year; after that, went to Service, and had not long been there, but a Young-man who was one of her Fellow Servants having some Difference with her, she seemed to put it up, as her manner was, never Scolding it out, but rather, being of a dogged, sullen Humour, kept her Malice to her self. But soon after their said Difference, the young-man died suddenly, to the Admiration of the Family, by reason he was a healthful, remperate Fellow, and never complained of any Illness till a few Hours before his Death, when the Poyson was working upon him. Her way of Poysoning was, by mixing *White Mercury*, or other Powder, in their Broath, or Drink.

These two Murdered Persons were buried, without Discovery of the Murderer; and she past on untill *August* last, when, having two Sweet-Hearts, or Young men that Couried her in Marriage, *viz. one John King*, a Servant to Mr. *Page* of *Ipstocke*, and *William Ridgway*, a Taylor, of the same Town or Village, it so fell out, that she seeming to have the greatest Liking to *William Ridg-*

*my*, as being a House-Keeper that had two Apprentices, and lived in some Repute; and before she knew which she liked best, having been so free with the other as that she thought he might be some Trouble to her, she resorted to her old Trade, and continued to keep the said *John King* Company untill she had an Opportunity to season him some Draught which sent him into the other World. This third Murder she accomplish'd about the middle of *August*, and past part of the Winter in Service, untill after *Christmas* she was married to the Unfortunate Taylor *William Ridgway*; with whom she had not lived above a Week but they hapned to have some Falling-out, yet such, as that *Ridgway* told her, he doubted he should have an uncomfortable Wife of her, or said some Words to that effect. However, their Difference seemed to be composed, and they went lovingly together to *Ashby De-la-zouch* Market to buy some Household-stuff; but in a Fortnight after their Falling-out, being in all about three Weeks after the Marriage, she gave him some Broath, where, in she had put *White Mercury*; at eating of which, he found great Fault, in the hearing of one or both the Apprentices, saying, something was in them more than ordinary, and that it grated in his Teeth: but notwithstanding that Dislike, he eat so much as worked his Destruction; for he soon fell into a very sad Condition, and died after they had been married three Weeks and two Days.

He was buried without any publick Discovery of his being Poysoned: But the time of her Diabolical Actions drawing near a Determination, or rather the Divine Justice now overtaking such horrid and unnatural Sins, this fourth Murder caused a Discontent amongst the Neighbourhood, who not being able to prove any thing against her, it rested some days, untill she attempted to Poyson her two Apprentices also, making her fifth Attempt

tempt upon *Richard Tilley*, her youngest Apprentice, seasoning his Broath with her wonted Ingredients ; but the Boy a little alarm'd by the Complaint his Master made of his Broath, or having watched her more narrowly, positively refused to eat his Poysoned Broath ; at which the pretending Anger, took them up and threw them away : the Boy repaired, as soon as possible, and acquainted his Father therewith, and how his Dame had thrown the Porridge away because he refused them, as likewise that he had observed her to throw some that were left in his Masters Dish, away ; the former Suspicion then grew into a Flame ; she was seized, and carried before *Sir Beaumont Dixey*, a neighbouring Justice of Peace, where all the Circumstances of Suspicion were charged against her, but more especially that of her Husband's Death ; who, after he had been buried eight days, was taken up again, and viewed ; but 'tis most remarkable, That when *John Ridgway*, the Father of the Deceased, forced her to touch the dead Body (which she was very averse to) it burst out at Nose and Mouth bleeding, as fresh as if new Stabbed : howbeit, her Instructor in those wicked Practises, to secure her for his own, kept her from any penitent Acknowledgment ; but on the contrary, she persisted in constant Denial of all that was charged against her, that she had either Poysoned her Husband or any other Person.

The Coroner being sent for, had such strong Evidence, that upon his Inquest, *William Ridgway* was found to be Poysoned, and the said *Elizabeth* thereupon committed to *Leicester Goal*. At the Assizes, which in some Weeks after was held for that County, she was brought to Trial, continuing in her Denial : but the said Inquest taken by the Coroner, with the concurring Evidence of the Boy hearing his Master's Complaint of the Broath, and upon a strict Inquiry, having been found out that she had



had bought *White Mercury* at *Ashley Delarouch* Market when she went with her said Husband to buy Household-stuff, (and soon after their Falling-out) also that when the Boy refused the Porridge, and that she found he suspected her, she desired him to say nothing of her throwing the Porridge away, but that if he would be good to her she would be good to him; with several other strong Circumstances that at least she had poysoned her Husband: and she being thereof found Guilty, received Sentence to be Burnt to Ashes at the Common Place of Execution for that County.

After Sentence, great Endeavours were used by many to work in her a Confession, and Remorse of such barbarous Crimes; all which proved ineffectual till the very Morning (*viz.* on *Monday* the 24<sup>th</sup>. of *March*. 1684.) that she was to be Executed; when she perceiving she must dye, and that her Denials would avail her nothing, confess'd, that for eight years past she had lain with a Familiar Spirit, who at her first Contract with him, tempted her to poyson her self, which she refused; and after that tempted her to poyson any one that offended her; that she had, during the said years, constantly concealed Poyson in her Hair, and upon all Occasions renewed it at several Markets: she confess'd the Murdering of her Mother, of her Fellow-Servant, and of her Sweet-heart, to be for the Reasons herein mentioned; also, that when married she did not love her Husband, and therefore Poysoned him; that she intended to have Poisoned her two Apprentices, *Richard Tilley* and *William Corbet*; and last of all to have Poisoned her self. She did not seem very free in her Confession, mentioning only those with whose Death she had been charged; therefore it was thought in her eight years time many others, not taken notice of, died by her Malice, by reason she could not, to the very last, be brought to any penitent Behaviour, refusing the  
Assi-

Assistance of two Eminent Divines who offered to go with her and assist her at the Place of Execution, telling them, she could Read and Pray as well as they could. Neither would she add any thing more at the Stake, or repeat what she had before confess'd; telling the People she had made a Confession before she came out. She was kept great part of the Day in Prison, in Expectation of a greater Discovery; and when at the Stake, was a Spectator of two Brothers who were Executed for other Crimes (one of which might have had a Reprieve if he would have hanged his Brother, and Executed her, but refused it) all which having no other Effect than hath been related, she was at length fastned to the Stake, much desiring they would let her be hanged first, which not being granted, as soon as the Fire touched her she gave one Shrick, and leaping besides the Block, with the Rope and the Smoak she was soon choaked, and afterwards burnt according to the Sentence.

If any Reader question the Truth of this Relation, or think the Author may have added thereto, they may be satisfied to the contrary by *William Corbet*, the eldest of the said Apprentices (one of them that was attempted to be Poysoned) who upon the Death of his Master being at Liberty, is come up to this Town, and lives now at the *Swan* in *Shoemaker's Row* in *Black-Fryers*, As also by *George Ridgway*, the Brother of the said *William Ridgman* that was Poysoned, who lives at the *Kings-Head* in *Kings-street* near the *Queens Garden*.

F I N I S.

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